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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4396
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000100

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STATE FOR INL AND SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2020

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL TX KTIP

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: COMMUNING WITH TURKMEN PROSECUTORS

REF: ASHGABAT 93

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Given the strict "no unofficial contact" rule the government imposes on all its officials, lunch invitations, and even informal conversations, between Turkmen officials and their foreign counterparts almost never happen. In a rare divergence, however, Post's recent Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) training (reftel) offered an opportunity to chat over lunch with two rising stars of the General Prosecutor's Office (PGO).

¶2. (C) Poloff discussed a wide range of topics with Batyr Kulhanov -- the deputy head of the PGO's international relations section and Post's main interlocutor on Trafficking in Persons issues -- and Murad Annamuradov, a prosecutor specialized in forensics. Kulhanov, in his early thirties, holds degrees in both law and physics (He taught physics before joining the PGO.), and played on Turkmenistan's national volleyball team in the early 90's. Notwithstanding all the rules about foreign contacts, he is habitually warm and friendly. Annamuradov, slightly older, is equally friendly and pleasant, and has a keen intellect. He was awarded the prize at the CSI training as the "most active participant." Both men clearly enjoy their work.

TURKMEN COMPLAINTS OF INTERNET FRAUD

¶3. (C) During the conversation, Kulhanov brought up the plight of several Turkmen citizens who, he said, had been defrauded by U.S. business contacts they had met on the internet. One such victim reportedly wired USD 100,000 to a U.S. contact to purchase and ship used American cars to Turkmenistan, after which the contact absconded. Kulhanov wanted to know what remedies might be available for the victims, and how the PGO could assist them. (NOTE: This is not the first we had heard of complaints of this kind. We plan to provide the PGO with a list of resources, including contact information for the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center. END NOTE.) With reference to the Sean Goldman international child custody case, Kulhanov was surprised to learn that a Brazilian court (or any foreign court, for that matter) would rule in favor of a U.S. complainant over their own national. He seemed to find the whole concept rather remarkable.

INTEREST U.S. LEGAL SYSTEM

¶14. (C) Kulhanov, who has never been to the U.S., said he would welcome an opportunity to learn more about U.S. legal institutions, particularly those dealing with human trafficking and immigration issues. Both prosecutors also asked about opportunities for foreign law graduates to study law (i.e. LL.M or Master of Laws programs) in the U.S. They were astounded to learn the cost of tuition at many U.S. law schools.

¶15. (C) Annamuradov asked Poloff how she liked Turkmenistan, noting that, "at least it's not Afghanistan here." He inquired about the current situation in that country, commenting that friends who served there in the military found it a "very difficult place to live." (At this point, Poloff was confused, uncertain which Turkmen military could have been in Afghanistan recently, until she realized he was referring to soldiers who had served there during the Soviet occupation. Annamuradov still seemed to be using that period as his main point of reference on Afghanistan.)

¶16. (C) COMMENT: At the end of lunch, Kulhanov said, "That was really interesting. We should get together and talk more often like this." He noted that, "it's much better to talk informally, than in the formal meetings where we usually meet." Unfortunately, however, such opportunities to converse with Turkmen officials are rare. END COMMENT.

CURRAN